

Strategic Plan 2024-29

Foreword

In the five years since we created our last Strategic Plan, The Barnet Group, like most providers of social housing and adult social care services, has faced significant change and endured major challenges; but it has also grown considerably, seen great successes, and supported the achievement of positive outcomes for some of the most vulnerable people living in Barnet.

The world in which we operate today looks very different to the one of 2019. In 2024, we are still emerging from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and we also face a continuously shifting landscape of increasing and diversifying customer demand and expectations, a changing regulatory and legislative environment, and significant financial pressures on our organisation as well as on our parent Barnet Council and our residents, customers, and service users.

The Barnet Group exists because we can deliver services in ways that the council is unable, and we believe our model of a public sector ethos with a private sector commercial focus is one of our greatest strengths. Our strong performance, both financial and in the quality of services we deliver when we compare ourselves to our peers, is testament to this. We are a complex and diverse set of organisations, and our growth over the past five years has enabled us to improve our financial resilience so that we can offer a range of support to Barnet Council and the borough's residents.

To ensure our future success, continue to protect public investment, and deliver real value for our customers, stakeholders, and communities, we need to meet the challenges this diversity of our operations creates for our leadership, the way we work, and our financial position.

We know our people are our very best asset, and our success is founded upon the strength of our workforce and the depth of knowledge and experience our colleagues possess. The work we all do contributes to changing and shaping lives and helps to strengthen equity and inclusion, and we are proud of the individual and collective efforts of our employees to support our customers and each other.

In the delivery of our Strategic Plan, we aim to recognise the key differences in the various services we provide across our Group whilst striving to be a unified, cost-effective, and successful business that offers improved services to customers, creates greater opportunities for staff, and instils confidence in the council in our ability to deliver outcomes and find solutions.

Our values of **Show Respect**, **Find Solutions**, and **Make a Difference** reflect our common understanding of what we stand for, how we shape our decision-making, and how we show our customers and stakeholders what is important to us. This five-year strategic plan sets out how we will ensure we stay true to these values and achieve our ambitions.

Summary

The Barnet Group's Strategic Plan sets out our five-year vision from 2024-2029 for how we will continue to deliver good services while supporting our residents, tenants, clients, service users and their families, and other people we support (collectively referred to as 'our customers') and Barnet Council through the challenges they face. The objectives we have set are based on our assessment of the external environment, the needs of our customers, staff, and stakeholders, and our own strengths and weaknesses.

Our vision is for **our customers to be our biggest champions**, and we will achieve this through our mission of **making a positive difference to every customer**. We know that in some areas of our operations we are a long way from our vision at the moment, and in developing this



Eamon McGoldrick
The Barnet Group Board Chair



Tim Mulvenna
Group Chief Executive Officer

Strategic Plan we intend to address that we have more to do to achieve it. In the face of a changing and increasingly complex and demanding environment, our success is dependent upon our ability to be more innovative in the way we deliver services, and to attract and retain the best staff by being a great place to work. We want everyone who works at The Barnet Group to understand and feel part of our vision and mission because only our colleagues can make that vision a reality.

Our approach is intended to support Barnet Council in caring for people, our places, and the planet. As the council's Local Authority Trading Company, we deliver a range of essential council services. We recognise the importance of our role in helping the council to meet its strategic aims, as well as the value we provide by helping to find solutions where this makes sense both financially and operationally. We will work collaboratively within our organisation and with the council, our partners, and customers to ensure the effectiveness of services, clear accountability and engagement, value for money achievements, and to recognise and tackle inequalities.

We remain committed to ensuring the safety of our customers, as well as to playing our part in national efforts to tackle climate change. We will provide good services in our core areas of operation, and will seek to maximise potential outcomes and achievements. We will value innovation and creativity, and will remain open to new opportunities and growth that will help us to be financially sustainable and continue to deliver services economically and efficiently.

By the end of the life of this strategic plan we will have maintained strong performance across our services, our customers will experience increased positive outcomes from their engagement with us, and our staff will be passionate about our goals and proud of our collective accomplishments.

Key challenges and opportunities

Increasing costs and restricted income – we face high borrowing costs as well as very high building cost inflation, while our core income is limited either by central government or by the council due to its budgetary constraints. This impacts upon our plans for growth as well as our ability to carry out our core functions and services, deliver added-value benefits, and modernise our ways of working.

Growing dependence from customers, diversifying needs, demand for homes, and demand for care and support services – we are facing a surge in demand for housing which places pressure on an increasingly limited supply of suitable housing. Customers who are already housed are increasingly vulnerable due to age, infirmity, or other factors, which places additional strain on our housing and homelessness services and the capacity of our care and support teams. Social care budgets are restrained, however there is growing demand for care and support services across the borough.

Regulation – most of our services are within the highly regulated sectors of housing and adult social care. The changing regulatory and legislative environment means that we face additional demands and costs to meet the standards set by our regulators, in addition to the expectations of the council.

Staff engagement, recruitment, and retention – The Barnet Group's workforce has grown considerably in recent years as we have taken on more services. Recruiting to vacancies, developing staff, preparing for succession, and retaining our most valued employees has become increasingly difficult as the competition for the best candidates has increased. As a provider of public services that needs to find ever more effective and inventive ways to drive efficiency, our ability to compete is constrained which means our offer must be both innovative and attractive, and we must work creatively to ensure The Barnet Group is a desirable and satisfying place to work.

Who we are

The Barnet Group is a Local Authority Trading Company that is owned by the London Borough of Barnet. It includes Barnet Homes, Your Choice (Barnet), TBG Open Door (known as "Opendoor Homes"), Bumblebee, and TBG Flex.

Across the group we employ nearly 1,000 staff and provide a range of services to people who live in both council-owned and Opendoor Homes-owned homes, people who are homeless or facing homelessness, care and support clients from Barnet and other local authorities, and private customers.

Our strategic approach

This Strategic Plan sets out three key objectives for The Barnet Group:

- **Provide quality services, care, and homes**
- **Support Barnet Council in the delivery of its priorities**
- **Increase our financial sustainability**

We will achieve these through four areas of focus:

By prioritising these four areas, we will harness our resources to address the key challenges we face and deliver for our customers and for the council.

At the heart of everything we do will be a commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion. We want our customers and staff to thrive, and to ensure our services and our workplace promote equitable treatment and understanding and respect. Our Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy sets out our commitment in greater detail, and our EDI values will shape the delivery of our Strategic Plan.



Our approach will be guided by eight principles:

- **Customer voice** – we will engage and involve our customers, and they will be central to our decision making.
- **Innovation** – we will build on and value a culture of innovation to make a positive difference to our people and our customers.
- **Quality services** – we will deliver high quality services and care to our customers and the people we support.
- **Safe, quality homes** – we will care for our places by focusing on quality and safety in the homes we build and maintain, and in our neighbourhoods.
- **Equality** – we will strive to meet the diverse needs of our people and customers, to be inclusive, and to ensure equality.
- **Data and IT** – we will use accurate, up-to-date, and robust data to shape our service delivery and decision-making, supported by the right technology.
- **Sustainability** – we will consider our impact on the planet and will aim to ensure our operations are delivered responsibly and sustainably.
- **Value for money** – we will make sure our resources are used effectively and efficiently.

We will act through our strategic operating plan of priority activities that support our aims and will ensure we deliver our goals. We will review this regularly to make sure our approach remains current and targeted at what is most important to our customers, the council, and our people.

Support our people to deliver the best for our customers and colleagues

The quality of our workforce is the biggest driver of the quality of everything we do. We need to attract, retain, engage, and develop great people to deliver outcomes and quality services for our customers and colleagues, realise our plans, and make sure of our long-term viability. We need to promote an inclusive, fair, and safe workplace in which our people can flourish, and their wellbeing is promoted. We need to develop effective leadership and workforce teams to embed a culture that cherishes collaboration, innovation, and compassion.

Our People Strategy will bring our approach to life, ensuring that The Barnet Group is a place where our people act with humility in seeking collective success, are proactive and hungry for more, and are intuitive and smart about people and their personal impact on others.

[Note: we are currently agreeing the qualitative and quantitative measures for each area of focus that we will use to understand how we are doing at meeting our objectives – potential ones are listed under each area, and will be finalised in the coming weeks]

We will know we have been successful when...

- We have improving staff engagement survey results (targets?)
- Training?
- Data?
- People-related EDI targets (aspirational from the EDI Strategy)?
- Behaviours / culture?
- Personal development?

Deliver quality services to our customers

There is a social heart to everything we do, and our customers are central to this. In a challenging external environment, it is even more critical that we continue to support our tenants, residents, service users and their families, clients, and other customers. We need to make sure we communicate effectively and provide information and services that are accessible, understand our customers and what is important to them, support customers to achieve positive outcomes, and make sure we hear the voice of our customers when making decisions. As the guardian of thousands of homes that are owned by the council, we need to make sure they are well-maintained and safe.

We will know we have been successful when...

- Satisfaction – TSMs?
- Satisfaction – C&S?
- CQC ratings?
- Data?
- Scrutiny / involvement?
- Performance? TSMs?
- £investment?
- Complaints? Learning?
- Link to BH delivery plan? YCB targets?

Enhance our effectiveness and nurture innovation

It is our ability to deliver services that are focused on the needs of our customers whilst achieving value for money that sets us apart. In order to continue to invest in essential services and deliver the efficiencies the council requires from us, we need to be ever more creative and nurture a culture that values innovation. Exploring digital services for our customers, making effective use of data and technology, and finding smarter ways to work will both improve our offer to customers and bring efficiencies and cost savings to our business. Excellent governance is key to ensuring we meet the expectations of our customers and the standards set by our regulators and the council. In our operations and in the management of homes, we need to play our part in contributing to the UK's and the borough's zero carbon targets.

We will know we have been successful when...

- VFM savings?
- RSH standards?
- Sustainability / environmental objectives?
- Complaints? Learning?
- Customer satisfaction?
- Data quality?
- Social value?
- Digital?

Grow our financial strength

We were originally created to enable Barnet Council to manage its social housing stock and provide key adult social care services at lower cost. To enable the council to continue to achieve efficiencies, we need to generate additional income to sustain our service delivery. This growth needs to be sustainable. We know that our ability to transform struggling services is an asset to the council, and we will continue to consider opportunities that arise to grow our business and support the council to meet its objectives. However, we must ensure that our financial viability is not compromised, and in considering any opportunity we will be mindful of our capacity and capability and will be clear about how growth or diversification may affect our ability to deliver other projects and priorities.

We will know we have been successful when...

- Development / growth?
- Service/scheme growth?
- Turnover?

Strategy Map

